



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

ASPECTS OF GREEK CONSERVATISM¹

BY HERBERT WEIR SMYTH

IT has been said that the Greeks created the science of progress. Our appreciation of this dazzling utterance depends on the angle of vision from which we view that elusive but imperious word "progress"; for the term has been so much misused that it is often taken to denote mere increase in magnitude standing in inverse relation to any creative principle; whereas, in strictness, "progress" must refer to the "creation of new ideas," as Sir Henry Maine asserted,— Archimedean levers of thought to move the world.

The essence of progress, as it manifests itself in Greece, lies in the free activity of the creative intelligence and in the desire for knowledge. The highest happiness of the Greek lay in knowing; he was still unconscious of the impotence of speculation in various aspects of knowledge; he was still in that happy state where, in the words of Bacon, *scientia et potentia in idem coincidunt*. Freedom of development and joy in the quest attended the creation of new ideas in literature and science.

Greek literature is the only absolutely original literature of Europe. In a rapid succession of inventive crises nearly every known species of poetry and prose was developed. Greece gave birth to the critical instinct applied to all knowledge and to the desire to compass all knowledge; to the science of theory; to the organization of society into all its various forms; to the philosophy of government and to the dream of an ideal state; to the science of ethics; to the search for the causes of Being; to the analysis of the functions of the mind; to the distinction between mind and matter. In the physical and mathematical sciences imagination achieved results which make modern science in part only a rediscovery or readaptation of Hellenic prevision.² The celestial mechanics of the Greeks anticipated in part Copernicus, Galileo,

¹ This paper is, with some additions, the Annual Address of the President of the American Philological Association for 1905 (December 27, 1905).

² A suggestive article on "Greek Anticipations of Modern Science," by Mr. H. S. Williams, will be found in *Harper's Magazine* for November, 1904.

and La Place. The Egyptians made geometry a practical science, the Greeks made it a theoretical science. Pythagoras studied the relation of physics to music and discovered that pitch depends on the length of the vibrating cord. The same thinker, or his scholars, held that the earth, which apparently is immobile, was in a state of motion, that it turned on its own axis, and was a sphere. Empedocles anticipated the science of chemistry in assuming that the elements were limited in number and that their combinations showed qualitative differences and proportional variations. Leucippus proclaimed the universal law of causation; and, in conjunction with Democritus, set forth a monistic conception of the material of the universe, the component atoms of which differed only in size from each other; while their collision with each other as they fell through space engendered a vortex motion. Anaxagoras reasoned that sun, moon, and planets were originally molten masses, and that the moon and earth had cooled to their present state. Aristarchus attempted to calculate the relative size of sun, moon, and earth; and anticipated Copernicus' doctrine of heliocentricity. Hipparchus calculated the distance of the earth from the moon to be equal to fifty-nine radii of the earth (a measurement that is erroneous by less than two radii), and demonstrated that the earth is not in the centre of the track of the sun. Eratosthenes measured the size of the earth with tolerable correctness; and, with greater exactness, the inclination of the earth's axis.

On every hand the Greeks seem always to be adventuring the unknown, forever to be "voyaging through strange seas of thought alone." The fruition of their prerogative of possession of the field was the orderly but rapid conquest of the territory still unsubdued by their intellect. In Hellenic thought there is always a passion for change, for some reaction from national ideals. Even in the late age of Diodorus, that historian complains that the Greeks were always innovating in the cardinal doctrines of philosophy, that they never accepted the results of their predecessors, and with the result that the souls of the learners in philosophy were continually in a state of oscillation. The intensity of Hellenic political life was so feverish that even the writers of the *Federalist* inveighed against its restlessness and turbulence. The existing state of things seemed always the result of some peripetia, and in the paroxysms of political passion of that "whirling nebula of common-

wealths," to use Mackail's phrase, the future was ever uncertain. Political change was in the direction of radicalism: it meant the substitution of one set of dominant ideas for another set of dominant ideas; for the Greeks did not, like the Romans, comprehend the virtue of concession that assumes the form of compromise.

The intellectual physiognomy of the nation could be altered almost in a generation. Thucydides was a younger contemporary of Herodotus, but differs from him as rationalism differs from credulity when it first discovers the righteousness of doubt. Literature and art advanced by leaps and bounds when Athens became the centre of culture. After the Persian wars, as Aristotle tells us, Athens devoted herself to every science with new passion. It is a commonplace of history that no age has witnessed a rapidity of development comparable to that of Athens from the battle of Plataea to the destruction of the Long Walls. The sculptures of Pheidias are scarcely more than half a century later than the pediments of Aegina; within a century from its beginning, tragedy attained to the art of Sophocles, and prose reached the perfection of the Platonic dialogue and the eloquence of Demosthenes. Indeed the speedy decline of several forms of literature was due to the rapid rise of other forms capable of higher artistic cultivation. The very ineffectiveness of much of Greek speculation, the indifference to the relation of fact to hypothesis, was the result of too restless an impulse to formulate ideas. The perpetual fever of progress, the passion for the "enigmas of the mind," begat over-hastiness of generalization in scientific inquiry. The conception of law had not time to ripen into a philosophical view of abstract justice, and the opposition to formulas fostered the confusion of fact with law, because law was spiritualized. Science was itself in some measure a reaction against exuberance of imagination, though in science imagination was too often the surrogate of observation. Hellenism did not subdue the ancient world because of the "excess of its own ideals."

The predominating quality of the Hellenic mind is indeed the capacity to create new ideas, for the Greek spirit is an energy, not a mere achievement, an *ἐνέργεια*, not an *ἔργον*. But I desire to point out that the customary approach to the individuality of that mind is largely by way of contrast to societies of men inimical to progress or to the recognition of the diversity of man's aspirations. We contrast Greece with the

lethargy and formalism of Egypt and Assyria, with the commercial materialism of Phoenicia, or with the spiritual passion of the Hebrew centred upon the god of his fathers. So long as we behold in the Greek race the embodiment of the essence of the Occidental spirit and contrast it with the Orient, we accentuate indeed a vital characteristic of the race, yet at the same time the very extension of our horizon deflects our attention from another mint-mark of the Greek spirit — its conservatism.

Another wider aspect of Hellenism has led to an undervaluation of the conservative tendencies of Greek life and thought. Because the Hellenic ideal as a distinct phase of human thought has entered as a factor of civilization into the modern world, we often regard it as something apart, as the abstract manifestation of the genius of the Greeks, who, it would seem, lived only to create that ideal and did not live for themselves. Apotheosis blurs the lineaments of individual and national physiognomy. Excess, not lack of sympathy, is the peril to which the Philhellene is prone; and his spiritualization of Hellenism may lead him to neglect the corrective ensured by a recognition of all the elements that make Hellenism what it was.

Let us then shift our point of view and inquire how far the forces of conservatism operate in this ferment of creative activity. What are the restrictive influences which moderate the impetus of this inexhaustible vitality? How far is the present oriented by the past?

The conservatism of the Greeks is of necessity a theme less sympathetic and less exhilarating than a study of the varied aspects manifested by their passion for progress. Such a theme may even provoke the hostility of surprise; but for that very reason may well prove suggestive and instructive. I purpose to treat only of the presence in Greek literature of some of the forces regulative and restrictive of the creation of new ideas, forces that modify the full activity of the individual, and in particular, of the sentiment of the past.

Such restrictions are either constant and fixed in national genius, which is the expression of national character as it contends with the limitations of environment; others are ephemeral and disappear with the age or individual.

Apart from the Dorians of Sparta, the Greeks are infinitely more individual than the Romans, who show few men stamped with the

mark of a Cato. From the time of Hippocles, that delectable person who danced away his marriage by standing on his head to outdo his rival suitors for the hand of Agariste, the Hellene is marked by a vigorous and distinct personality. There is a monstrous egotism in Empedocles, the sophists, Apollonius of Tyana. But in the literature of the classical age the full expression of personality is commonly limited by the collective forces of tradition. The love-lyric of the Aeolians is the most individualistic poetry of Greece; but it was ephemeral. Passion of such intensity consumed itself; and Sappho had no successors.

The study of individualism began with Aristotle. In the jaded Alexandrian age the decline of the city-state, the centralization of power, the spirit of scientific inquiry, the disintegration of a common faith, the antagonism of the creeds, the rise of philosophical asceticism, enforced an individualism that made man more conscious of himself, more impatient of the regulations of society, and the literature of his creation more individual and therefore more modern. But the development of individuality to an extent like that of modern times is unknown in Greece, because Greek life was more institutional than modern life, more subject to the collective restrictions of a national ideal.

The main feature of this ideal, as it manifested itself in the written word, is the fact that literature appealed to the universal, which is not subject to the inroads of chance. The withdrawal from the ephemeral to the permanent is attended by a larger insistence on that which is alien to the idiosyncrasies of temperament and the passing mood, which are the more pronounced in proportion as the area diminishes to which any phase of literature addresses itself. The absorption of the artist into the community made him solicit other minds, made his work appeal to the "greatest common denominator" of a body of listeners who were a necessary condition of his art; the beauty of his work dares not allow so subtle a deftness of the craftsman in words as to withdraw it from the appreciation of a wide commonalty of interest. The universality of Greek literature was gained also by the freedom of recourse to the writings of the past, which were assumed as known to all, and to sentiments which voiced national ideals of life and thought.

We speak indeed of national ideals, though there was no Greek *nation*, no common Hellenic type in art, language, or literature so long as Hellas retained the basic principle of her life — the individuality of

smaller race-units. There was no *national* literature after Homer, and the Homeric epic itself is the joint product of only two tribes, the Aeolic and the Ionic, to the exclusion of the tribe spread over north-west Greece and the Peloponnese. Science only was national in the truest sense, or books like the History of Polybius, who was the first Greek to look on his country with the wider vision of the world made possible by the supremacy of Rome. The desire to compass all human knowledge was unattempted until imagination had lost its potency.

The literature of the classical age is a literature of tribes, of narrower ethnic units, each with its own special endowments supplementing each other; though a certain homogeneousness of subject-matter characterizes all. The very names *Ionian* and *Aeolian* probably had no existence until emigration gave to each tribe the consciousness of individuality. The Greek is bound in the circle of the ideas of his own tribe, narrowed by his sense of opposition to others; and his political and social life is marked by a sense of disassociation or antipathy. Though all Hellenes felt a common bond in their community of blood, language, custom, and religion, there was yet the lacuna of the apprehension that the *will* to unite was the potent factor of nationality.

The origins of the Hellenic tribal differentiation elude analysis by the ethnologist, to whom the Greek people ultimately resolves itself into a fusion of alien races, the primitive settlers, or "Carians," and the later Aryan folk. It is not impossible then that the qualities we call Hellenic are in the last analysis the result of a mingling of blood; and some scholars would father upon the defenceless Carians the Hellenic, but un-Aryan, proneness to the transgression of the lips. Be that as it may, the fact of fusion is not to be discredited; nor is it perhaps idle to remember that the secret of the omniscient psychology of Shakespeare has been sought in the union of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic genius.

In most modern criticism of Hellenism the Ionic-Attic element is regarded as characteristic of the entire race. The Ionians of Asia Minor and the Aegaeon were apostles of intellectual revolt and intolerant of all limitations of the free development of individuality; but they were also intolerant of sustained exertion. From the Aeolians the Ionians took over the epic, expanded it, recreated it; they originated the elegy and developed it in most of its moods; and iambic verse as the vehicle of satire, and put to wider purposes than satire, is their

creation. The genius of the Ionians is synonymous with progress, but intensity of passion, the tumultuous outpouring of the heart, is foreign to them. Their restlessness under restraint, their impatience of severe symmetry, and their mundaneness (as in the *Homeric Hymns*) made them strangers to that form of lyric which was the concurrent expression of a sense of civic unity and of fervent piety. The solemn elevation and architectonic splendor of the choral ode is alien to native Ionic genius.

The race that first narrowed its sympathies in literature was the first to display the qualities of the Hellenic genius in its highest perfection. War and colonization were throughout the external stimuli of Greek literature; and the Aeolians, upon a vanishing background of immigration and conquest, grouped around the figure of Achilles the myths of their earlier home beyond the sea. The master mind that shaped the nucleus of the *Iliad* is Aeolic. High-strung, chivalrous, dauntless in danger, joyous, meeting life at all points, sensitive and passionate, direct and immediate in its sympathies, yet fond of the sumptuosities of parade—such is the temperament of the race of Alcaeus and Sappho. But so long as the Aeolians formed a distinct political aggregation they displayed an almost total atrophy of interest in everything remote to their immediate environment. There is no Aeolic history, no Aeolic eloquence, no Aeolic philosophy. Athens had become the one *πόλις* of the Greek world, science had coördinated Greek thought, when the market woman at Athens still could recognize by his accent alone the un-Attic origin of the successor of Aristotle in the Lyceum.

Between Aeolian and Ionian there is a certain degree of sensuous kinship, as their speech is to a certain degree akin. To them stands opposed the Dorian with his inborn conservatism in morals, politics, literature, and religion. Not unsusceptible indeed to the tale of the Achaean Agamemnon, whom they annexed as a national hero, the Dorians had no part in the expansion of the epic, from which they were excluded by the very fact that they were Dorians. Nor had they the capacity to supplement Homer's picture of an idealized humanity. To the insurgent impulse of the lyric poet, whose verse pulsates with the passion of living, the Dorian was a stranger. The reflective attitude of Dorian thought did not allow to the individual larger scope than to record the vicissitudes of fortune that scarred the life of Theognis.

Incurious of the theoretical organization of political institutions and of the relations of cause and effect, fixed in his stational system, the Doric race in southern Greece contributed nothing to the art of history save the short and simple annals of his native canton. Music was an art cultivated in the service of the state, but the staff of the presiding officer restrained an applause that had voiced approval of any modification of traditional forms. The lately discovered papyrus of Timotheus shows that poet triumphant over the bitter hostility of Sparta to richer and more expressive music. The ruthless ephor used the argument of the knife in reducing to the proper number of strings the cithara of Timotheus' famous predecessor, Phrynis. At Argos death was the penalty for the musician who might venture to employ an instrument with more strings than the fathers had used. Then, too, in Dorian lands narrowness in methods of literary training—the undue preference for oral teaching as opposed to the use of writing—prevented the diffusion of culture beyond the circle of those who came under the immediate influence of the schools.

The large enthusiasm of the modern world for Greece is evoked by Greek life and art as a *whole*. The sympathy that prompts that enthusiasm is indeed just, but so far as a major part of the Greeks, the Dorians of the mainland, is concerned, it must seek its inspiration in the solemn and simple grandeur of Doric architecture, in Doric work in marble and bronze, and in the qualities of men trained to duty and to self-repression by the harshest form of militarism known to antiquity.

In literature, as the expression of the imaginative faculty, the Dorian is impassive. Sparta was the nurse, not the mother, of poets, and if we may believe tradition, it was only under the stress of public calamity that Sparta sought abroad what she did not engender at home—the wisdom of the poet to tranquillize the unruly temper of a discordant state. Elsewhere a rude joviality begat the beginnings of comedy, but Dorian comedy, like Dorian tragedy, was soon transferred to higher purposes by a people of Ionic stock. Only that form of poetry which voiced the formal cult of the gods found a reception in a state that absorbed completely the individuality of the citizen. Pindar boasts his kinship with the Dorian aristocracy, but Pindar was after all a Boeotian, native of a land where the blood of the sluggish Dorian was mingled with that of the more imaginative Aeolian.

Of prose, as a fine art, the Peloponnesian was incapable, but the intellectual quality of the Dorian race was not without fruit in speculation concerning number, measure, and mathematics. In the *κόσμος* of Pythagoras has been found the ideal of the Dorian state, which Attic thinkers came to regard as the model for the regeneration of their own fierce ochlocracy.

The current view of the Dorian character is open to objection in part because it extends to all the inhabitants of the Peloponnese the qualities of the dominant Spartans; whereas, in fact, the Megarians and Cretans were traders and sailors; the Corinthians gave themselves over to pleasure and commercialism; and the democracy of Argos was a menace to the dominion of the Spartan system. The Dorian states in Sicily were freed from many of the prejudices of the home country, and the result of their peculiar physiographic and social conditions was a free expansion of artistic sympathies, the cultivation of eloquence and of historical composition.

The immobile Peloponnesian Dorians are from some points of view a blot on the Hellenic scutcheon, and there seems good ground for the hypothesis of an original cleavage between them and the Hellenes who immigrated from the Balkan peninsula by the eastern route. Comparative philology has abandoned a Graeco-Italic unity; comparative ethnology may have to reckon with a Doro-Italic unity. The division of the Dorians and Latins into three tribes, the parallelism of *γερονσία* and *senatus*, the predominance in both nations of the magistrates over the people, their common practical and religious sense, their common exaltation of the authority of the state which is rooted in veneration for the sanctity of law, their common gravity and indomitableness, all these are factors that, with a greater or less degree of probability, point to prehistoric kinship between the Dorian and Latin races.

Early Greek literature is thus particularistic in many respects because of the limitations of tribal capacity, limitations that are inherent rather than self-imposed, as is commonly maintained. The progress of the race is attained by a series of complementary advances on the part of the several race-units, which were able to create, in rapid succession, literary types that in a primitive people assumed definite outlines, — types that are organic and shaped to artistic purposes as it were by the cogeny of a natural law.

Special forms of Greek literature originating in one tribe rarely reach perfection in that tribe, and commonly migrate to the Athenians, who alone were able both to absorb and to recreate almost every species of literature not of indigenous growth. A fact, often forgotten, is that a form of Greek literary art, when it has once passed into alien territory, is rarely reacquired by its originators and never then transformed to higher values. Thus the renewal of the epic by its Aeolic creators was an attempt to give to other sagas, equally a part of the Trojan cycle, the amplitude that constitutes one feature of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; but to the neglect of that virtue of the Homeric economy which lies in the restriction of the theme, in the creation of the unity of a moral situation. What holds true of Arctinus and Lesches, holds true also of Ctesias.

The types of Greek literature are conditioned also by prescriptions of *form* which kept the poet in permanent contact with the past. There is no more striking external difference between Greek and modern poetry than the limitations of language imposed on the ancient craftsman in words. To the Greek, matter and form are linked by a law as natural as is the freedom or even the caprice of modern literature. Nothing is more opposed to our ideas of the liberty of Greek art, nothing is more opposed to our ideas of aesthetic beauty, than the control exercised by the language of the originators of any literary type over all forms of poetry whose implicit ethos confessed allegiance to that literary type. The Greek poet was bound by an artistic convention which implicitly marked the continuity of kindred literary types; he felt himself possessed of a heritage bequeathed to him by the members of his guild who preceded him by even a thousand years. All Greek poetry is thus marked by a peculiar attitude of loyalty to the past. All Greek poetry, except such lyrics as those of Sappho, is artificial in that it does not reflect exclusively the idiom of the soil. There is no Greek language symbolizing a unity of national impulses until Greece lost its liberty. The tendency to cohesion first manifested in the political and philosophical reflection of the fourth century was consummated by the arms of Alexander.

To the restrictive influences exerted by the tribal aggregate upon literary types and upon language, there is added a further restriction that concerns the individual alone; a restriction that distinguishes the classical from the Alexandrian age. For the Alexandrian age broke

down the barriers confining the man of letters to a distinct sphere. It is, as it were, in compensation for the limitation of his activity as a political being that the age of the Ptolemies widened the area of man's literary activity. Callimachus shows by his *Hecale* and his epigrams that he is no mean poet; he was also an erudite scholar and a critic of no mean rank. The fame of Eratosthenes is indissolubly associated with geometry and chronology; yet he was also poet, philosopher, and philologist: a quinquepartite polymath with the nickname of the "pentathlete." All the librarians of the Museum were, in fact, poets until the narrowing influence of grammar put an end, with Aristarchus, to their wooing of the Muse. They are all intellectual descendants of Aristotle, first of the Alexandrians, though last of the classics.

"Human nature," says the teacher of Aristotle, "seems to be incapable of imitating many things well." The effectiveness of Greek literature is, in part, the result of concentration of energy upon a series of single artistic purposes. Within the province of his art the Greek of the classical age, working under the restrictions of literary types, held in check the impulse to do *many* things well. Until Euripides the Greeks were not absentees from practical life, which afforded them, unlike the Alexandrian scholars, some compensation for their restriction to one sphere of literary activity; though Sophocles, when in command before Samos, must have felt something of the same surprise with which, I fancy, an American man of letters first views himself when he wakes up to find himself a minister plenipotentiary. There are indeed exceptions; mysticism and mathematics meet in Pythagoras, for the warfare between science and theology was not universally imperative; Empedocles was at once poet, seer, fanatic, physicist, biologist, sanitary engineer; and flung aside the ambition of kingly power. But the poet does not encroach upon the field of his brother artist in prose, and Ion of Chios presents an anomaly in being alike a writer of tragedy, lyric, historical memoirs, and philosophy; while the sportive intermingling of prose and verse was an audacity reserved for the much later Menippus. Aristotle tried his hand at poetry, like Schelling and Hegel. The writer of prose, as the tragic poet, may turn an epigram on occasion, but the epigram was often a mere metrical trick, and it was patient with mediocrity; and therefore persisted in constant use for more than two thousand years.

In general, however, the law holds good : there is no intrusion into alien fields. There were no Lessings or Schillers or Wordsworths or Laniers to unite criticism of poetry with poetry itself. The Greek dramatist was by virtue of his art a lyrist as well, but this fact, and the history of the evolution of the Greek drama, give no support to the fancy that a lyric poet is only an undeveloped dramatist. Pindar and Bacchylides are contemporaries of Aeschylus, and neither attempted the drama ; they are not embryonic dramaturgists. The tragic and the comic drama are mutually exclusive ; and it is only after the other guests had succumbed to their worship of Dionysus at the Great Banquet that Socrates compelled the drowsy Aristophanes and Agathon to agree with him that the genius of tragedy and comedy were one. But the sober realities of waking hours uninspired by the patron god of both arts incited neither the sovereign comic artist nor the tragic poet, whose *Flower* was the greatest of ancient dramatic innovations, to encroach on each other's territory, and thus to put into practice a theory that has been left for modern times to realize.

The restrictions and conservatisms we have been considering constitute only a fraction of the whole. On every hand we encounter traces of this devotion to tradition that are not remarkable in their isolation, but surprising by reason of their persistence in a society so imbued with the spirit of change. Greek philosophy was intolerant of immobility and of repression ; yet dissent from the letter of the teachings of Epicurus was regarded as impiety ; and that, though Epicureanism is a more genuinely Greek philosophy than its great rival Stoicism, which bears the mark of a founder of Semitic stock in its indifference to everything except the good. We think of Greek plastic art as hostile to strict regulations imposed by *taste* (for which the Greeks had no strictly corresponding word) ; yet there is the " canon " of Polyclitus. Or take the conservatism manifested in the tardy use of writing, due in part to a meticulous distrust of symbols and to preference for the spoken word ; in part also to the fact that the Greeks had an absorbing interest in legends preserved orally and essentially more valuable than contemporaneous events which admitted of immediate recording. This hesitation to make use of writing, as Dr. Butcher has shown,¹ kept the laws

¹ *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius*, pp. 166 ff.

long unwritten and delayed the birth of formal history. Then, too, there is the marked opposition of the language to the importation of foreign words.

The aspects of Greek conservatism are too numerous not to show that, with all the rapidity of the advance of ideas, the masses were static. On every hand we meet with the crudest contrasts. The idealistic dreams of Plato, the subtleties of the ontology of Aristotle, coexist with the superstitions of the sanatorium at Epidaurus. In religion, antitheses are not strange; philosophy had disintegrated the traditional faith, but Athens still had her state-seer in the age of rationalism; still removed from her territory any inanimate object which had been the instrument of death; and, from a like scruple, still forbade that an exile for involuntary homicide, who had been accused of another murder, should be tried on the new charge except in a boat while the jury of the ephetae pronounced judgment from the inviolable shore. Athens still retained the archaic owl-emblem on her coins when the mints of Syracuse were issuing the exquisite floating Victories that challenge our admiration to-day. In vase painting also the old forms held ground, but were employed for purposes of embellishment and to fill out space. In costume, the influence of the Persian wars, otherwise so stimulative of progress, started a reaction against the garb that indicated too strongly the malign influence of Asia. There was not a little stereotyped symbolism in the use of gesture. Until Lucian's time neither unheroic sentiment nor unheroic action seem to have rendered incongruous the superhuman trappings of the tragic actor. In language, words exercised a tyranny not less imperious than they do to-day. Not until Eratosthenes was any authoritative voice heard reprehending the inhumanity in the traditional conception of *βάρβαρος*, which had, till his time, with partial or sentimental protest only, conveyed the idea of a difference between men not merely in degree but in kind. It was Aristotle who advised Alexander to treat the Greeks as friends, but the barbarians as enemies, and who justified the maltreatment of the latter on the ground that they were incapable of self-government. Eratosthenes distinguished mankind according to their virtues and their vices.

Some of these conventions are trivialities, akin to those found in every society that safeguards its past, conventions that leave no mark upon literature. But literature itself is permeated by conventionalisms.

The sententious utterance which packs into few words the collective wisdom of an age is, in its primitive form, contemporaneous with the rudest stages of thought. In the sixth century B.C., the century of antitheses, when the traditionary beliefs were first readjusting themselves to the new speculation, the expansion of gnomic wisdom is not a retrogression to the age of Hesiod: it is part of the profounder attitude towards the inner and the outer life. But in the age of enlightenment, when the piecemeal logic of the maxim ceased to carry enough of truth to contain the greater complexity of ethics, it still dominated literature. The Greeks possessed the gnomic gift; their social ethics as regards the gnome would not have satisfied Lord Chesterfield; but they were not men who appeased their souls by aphorisms, nor did they reduce every phase of life to the terrors of a truism; nevertheless what had once been a brilliant moral aperçu they retained in oratory and the drama in part as a foil against obsolescent ideas, in part also as a pure conventionalism; just as much of their pessimism is mere literary veneer.

The latest and most perfect form of Greek poetry, the drama, is full of external and internal conventions that in large measure determine its character. We think at once of the constant presence of the chorus on the stage which necessitates the closest interrelation of the parts; of the limitation of the number of the actors which restricts the variety of the scenes; of the avoidance of actual murder (though not of acts of violence) because the theatre was sacred ground; of the sheer restriction of the theme which, except in the case of the parts of a trilogy following each other in immediate succession, prevented the complete portrayal of the transformation of character as it crystallized into will under the pressure of fate or of the conflict of duty and desire. The unrepresented antecedents of a tragedy constitute so large a feature that the play itself resembles only the climax of a modern drama. Then, too, as Mr. Brander Matthews has shown, the dramaturgist was not independent of the actor. Hamlet was no doubt "fat and scant of breath" because Burbage was waxing fat. Cleander was the favorite actor of Aeschylus; tradition expressly reports that Sophocles wrote with Tlepolemus in mind; the monodies of Euripides clearly owe their prominence to the vogue of certain virtuosos; and Aristotle expressly says that good poets composed "episodic" plots to please the actors.

Above all, invention was under bonds to tradition and to myth, which is not the same thing as tradition. But *μῦθος* was vivified by *διάθεσις*. The framework was permanent; originality clothed the skeleton with flesh. Into this Frankenstein the poet put his own soul. Living and working in the myth, he shaped details to the exigencies of his imagination, fashioned his dramatic personages to different psychological values. But the freedom of individual conception was invaded by the law of his art, which made constant the actors in the struggle of antagonistic forces.

And because of the inevitableness of the tragic personages, the end was constant. The dramaturgist might voice the changing aspirations of each age with its deepening intellectual and moral ideals, he might subtilize the lineaments of moral physiognomy; his very range might be wider than that of the modern playwright in whom the one passion of love "eats out the rest"; he might attain variety by creating different aspects of the same traditional character — yet his theme was set by religious prescription, and it moved steadily towards a fore-ordained end. Because that end was known in advance, the poet relied in large measure on what stands "outside the drama," and did not depict, with the nice precision of Shakespeare, the march to the end; nor did he make the conclusion evolve itself with inevitable cogency from the details of the scene he stages.

Because the end is predetermined, it is lame in comparison to the peripetia, lame in comparison with many modern dramas; though something may be said to show that the greatest works of literature show an ultimate relaxation of intensity and subsidence of emotion. However that may be, I am concerned here only with the larger aspects of the question, with the fact that the fate of Greek tragic art is involved in the permanence of the same *dramatis personae*. The doers of tragic deeds remained the same because of the similarity of the legends most appropriate for tragic representation, legends which ultimately were confined to the story of a few houses. This danger of similarity of theme is common to literature and to painting; as Leonardo da Vinci says in his *Trattato della pittura*: "a face, motion, or an entire figure, must not be repeated in another . . . picture." And yet all the three great Attic dramatists dealt with the story of Oedipus, Philoctetes, Ixion, Palamedes, and Telephus. The heroes of Aeschylus and Sophocles are

distinguished by majesty of soul and of station; in Euripides they preserve only the trappings of their heroic estate. Bereft of their nobility through rationalization, they shrink to the stature of common men with the complex impulses of common life; but their deeds are fixed by tradition and the doers have a religious inevitableness. Orestes and Electra must still wear the guise of princely national figures; and so the heroes of the Border ballads kept on fighting after they had been cut in pieces.

No people had a more distinctly national art than did the Greeks in their tragic drama; but the very nationality of that art, because it was rooted in the past, was its undoing. It was the sentiment of the past that prevented the Greeks from utilizing the fruitful motive of Agathon's *Flower*, the caprice of ancient tragic art, the one drama in which all the personages and incidents were fictitious.

Ὅταν τὰν ὑάκινθον ἐν ὄρρεσι ποίμενες ἄνδρες
πόσσι καταστείβοισι, χάμαι δέ τε πόρφυρον ἄνθος. . . .

Contemporaneous history had been tried as a *motif* in an earlier period of the evolution of the drama, but it was abandoned as less effective than the traditional myth. The ill success of Phrynichus' *Capture of Miletus* was not due, it will be remembered, to the fact that it dealt with a recent event as such.

Agathon was the first of the moderns, but his innovation (notwithstanding it possessed an excellence that gained Aristotle's approbation) remained undeveloped, not only because of the pressure of adverse opinion exerted by his greater contemporaries, but also because the removal of all traditionary figures would have resulted in the disintegration of the spirit that linked tragedy with the past. The successors of the Tragic Three were Hellenic Levites, guardians of the heroic ark, and their conservatism, enforcing a religious convention, of which it was an expression, crippled all effective progress. Dramatic invention found an outlet in the Platonic dialogue and in a realistic comedy that was under no bonds to an over-exacting past. For six centuries the tragedies of the three great Attic masters held the stage not only because of their intrinsic excellence, but also because there was no fruitful progress in the art. Tragedy was devitalized by its refusal to abandon a subject-matter that voiced with authority the sentiment of the past.

Tragedy and lyric, and the epic as well, owed much of their enduring value in the estimation of the Greeks to their expression of veneration for the past. And yet the Egyptian priest, the exponent of an immemorial antiquity, said "Solon, you Greeks are always children." Goethe bade us look upon the ancients as children, and another no less sympathetic worshipper of Hellas has said that the Greeks had no past. Measured by the sense of age that has come upon the modern world, the Greeks represent to us an immortal and irrecoverable adolescence. Yet to themselves the past was forever present; they lived for the reintegration, not for the disintegration, of the forces consecrating their traditions; and no people has so indelibly wrought into a literature so inexhaustibly young such large collective sympathies with the past. Greece, too, had its Mayflower motive; the foundation of cities had been a theme of poets long before it became the theme of civic genealogists. The Olympic victor who has attained the summit of human felicity, as he listened to Pindar's triumphal ode, lost himself in his heroic counterpart; the spectator as he sat crowded against his neighbor in the Dionysiac theatre beheld, in mythic semblance of his greater self, the traditional heroes of his race move in awful majesty to their self-wrought doom. Then, too, the continuity of the past was upheld at Athens by the survival of families not superior before the law, but still retaining social prestige by reason of their place in the Olympian and heroic peerage. The line of Neleus still lived in the Alcmeonidae, and the *Ajax* no doubt was witnessed by Philaïdae who traced their descent through the son of Telamon back to Zeus himself. The petty conflicts of common life, its graver disharmonies, the impulses that incite to ambition and vengeance, the intensities of a cantonal life which effected an over-rapid translation of thought into action—all the aspects of the drama of life were ennobled, when, by the visualizing power of art, they were transferred to the mythical world and embodied in actors divine and of the seed of gods. The best known fables were known only to the few, but, despite this significant (and often neglected) remark of Aristotle, the majority of spectators of the tragic contests was well aware that the play was to deal with the ancestry of the race. With each returning spring the Athenian knew that at the Dionysiac festival he might again behold, in the full splendor and authority of the present, Agamemnon king of men, Priam bereft of so

many goodly sons, Helen, whose invincible beauty was the spring of desolation, the gods themselves, not mere wraiths, but fashioned into living forms and speaking a language worthy of their high estate.

The vision of the poet is immediate in proportion to its imaginative quality. Yet in this fictive world of tragedy, where imagination has freest scope, as in every other form of literature, these Greeks, who are possessed by the passion for innovation, restrict the impulse to originality. In motive, scene, and phraseology the Greeks are possessed by the passion for imitation; and their literature is unique in the coextension of spontaneity with a "commemorative instinct" that links its various forms by a chain of associative reminiscence. ἔτερος ἐξ ἑτέρου σοφός. Every poet of Greece is a conscious bondsman to the past.

Thus Euripides borrows less from Homer than either Aeschylus or Sophocles, but appropriates about the same number of phrases from Aeschylus as from Sophocles. In the beginning he borrows from Sophocles, then he is himself, next he turns to Aeschylus, finally he borrows least from others and from himself.¹ One form of this indebtedness appears in the fact that Euripides in one of his earlier plays takes over a verse from Aeschylus, which, by unconscious appropriation, reappears as a self-iteration in a play otherwise free from borrowed phrases. Sophocles' chief debt to Euripides appears in the later plays, the *Trachiniae* and the *Philoctetes*. But apart from such details, it is significant that when the breach with the past is more radical as regards the spirit and temper of tragedy, then it is that the recourse to the earlier and loftier type is more pronounced. So Virgil's debt to Homer is more marked when the situation affords him less opportunity to give effect to his capacity for emotion.

It is impossible to assign distinct psychological values to all the cases of alienation, and to mark off what was unconscious, subconscious, or conscious.² Some part was conscious though unacknowledged, voluntary retention of phrases that had crystallized into popularity through the aid of rhythm, antithesis, or by reason of other felicitousness; e. g.

¹ See Schroeder, *De iteratis apud tragicos Graecos* in *Dissert. Philol. Argent.* VI (1882), 1-130.

² See the important papers on unconscious iteration and associated reminiscence by Mr. A. B. Cook in the *Classical Review*, Vols. XV and XVI.

the proëmia, transitions, and endings in the orators, or the recurring turns of common speech that have taken sanctuary in Euripides. The roving eye of the poet was always on the search for vagabond beauties. Similarity of situation often brought with it similarity of expression that had lain dormant in the memory until the advent of the inventive moment. Like the spear of the Homeric warrior, a tragic situation in a master poet cast a long shadow. There is no more splendid testimony to the contemporary fame of the *Oresteia* than Sophocles' imitation in the *Electra*, where Clytaemnestra, on receiving her death blow at the hands of her son, exclaims ὦμοι πέπληγμαι and then ὦμοι μάλ' αὔθις. What spectator would not recall the death-cry of Agamemnon, stabbed by his adulterous queen?

ὦμοι πέπληγμαι καιρίαν πληγὴν ἔσω.
ὦμοι μάλ' αὔθις δευτέραν πεπληγμένος.

The very words echo the unchanging law of retaliation. Euripides has nothing of the sort. When his imitation is intended, it is apt to veil an objection (*Bacchae* 193 = Soph. frag. 633), or it may endeavor, by variation in the language, to outdo his model (*Phoen.* 870 = Soph. *O. C.* 552). The latter purpose is not unknown in Sophocles.

κάκφυσιῶν ὀξεῖαν αἵματος σφαγὴν
βάλλει μ' ἑρεμνῆ ψακάδι φοινίας δρόσου (*Agam.* 1398 ff.)

καὶ φυσιῶν ὀξεῖαν ἐκβάλλει ῥοήν
λευκῆ παρεῖα φοινίου σταλάγματος (*Antig.* 1238 ff.).

Somewhat similar is the relation of Bacchylides to Pindar. The Cean poet has twenty-nine compound adjectives found in Pindar in the same form, but twenty-eight showing a slight difference in the first or second member. The borrowing may not be altogether on the side of Bacchylides.

But I may not enter upon the details of literary reminiscence. Let me only point out the reasonableness of the view that there is a difference between lyric and tragic poetry on the one hand and epic poetry and oratory on the other. Only the epic poet and the orator repeat outright passages that have been used before, because both appeal directly to their hearers, because the art of both is essentially

ephemeral.¹ Homer, called the first and greatest of the orators by Hermogenes, took no thought of the festivals at which his lays were to be recited for generations; his sole aim was to enthrall his audience with the tale of far-off days of battle-din or of wandering on the sea. Demosthenes had no other purpose than to exhaust his utmost skill to gain the votes of jury or ecclesia; publication after the battle had only the value of a *pièce justificative*; he was untroubled whether or not future generations would be equally convinced with his present audience. Both Homer and Demosthenes are for the moment impatient of the labor involved in the sustained independence of originality, because both have a single and an immediate aim. But Pindar looks to immortality; and Aeschylus dedicated his tragedies to Time. With oratory, at least, it may hold true that repetitions decrease in quantity in proportion as the aesthetic, and not the practical, sense is gratified. What is merely auxiliary to Demosthenes' purpose (if I may call auxiliary that interfusion of reason and passion that makes his style), what is merely subsidiary, becomes to later generations the abiding charm.

But with regard to the point at issue — the voluntary renunciation of independence, the limitation of the creative faculty — how are we to account for the pervasive reminiscences of Greek literature? My feeling is that we strain Greek idealism in seeking an explanation for plagiarized phrases in the Greek sentiment that “a thing can be well said once, but cannot be well said twice” (*τὸ καλῶς εἰπεῖν ἅπαξ περιγίγνεται, δις δὲ οὐκ ἐνδέχεται*); or because, to quote the words of the late Professor Jebb, that I may preserve the elegant finish that characterized his every utterance, “if a thought, however trivial, has been once perfectly expressed, it has, by that expression, become a morsel of the world's wealth of beauty.”²

I venture to believe that reminiscent phraseology in Greek is, at least, less the expression of an inevitable perpetuity of artistic perfection in each single detail than an illustration of that imitative character of

¹ The identity of the concluding verses of several plays of Euripides is exceptional in the drama, as is shown by Mr. Cook, to whom I owe the substance of the distinction made in the text.

² The maxim *δις καὶ τρίς τὸ καλόν*, which goes back to Empedocles (*frag. 25*), justified a recurrence to the same theme, not to the same words.

Greek literature as a whole which is a result of the superlative advantage possessed by that literature — the priority of its masterpiece. For the best came first. It is the reverential regard for Homer that made language courtesy to its sovereign; it is again the sentiment of the past rather than the intrinsic superiority of each particular phrase that prompted recourse to the epic. "Imagination was forever haunted by the types of humanity established in clear outline by Homer." Homer was the "captain and teacher of the charming tragic company," said Plato; and Homer had the power of continually adjusting himself to the spirit of each successive age. His words lent themselves to every exigency of life. When Hierocles, the philosopher of Alexandria, flung drops of his blood into the face of the judge by whose orders he had been scourged, he exclaimed :

Κύκλωψ, τῆ, πίε οἶνον, ἐπεὶ φάγες ἀνδρόμα κρέα.

From the time when Arctinus knit his tale to the *Iliad* down to the time of the last singer of the *Anthology*, Homer remained the *largo fume* from whom poet after poet drew both theme and phrase. The tragic poet of greatest imaginative sweep acknowledged that his dramas were crumbs from the table of Homer (thereby including all that was attributed to Homer); and yet Aeschylus drew only ten subjects for his plays from the epic, while Sophocles, the "tragic Homer," drew thirty-two. The language of Parmenides and Empedocles is largely epic, and the quality of their scientific imagination is not alien to the quality of the imagination of poetry; the birth of artistic prose is the result of the transformation of the ruder annals of the logographers under the influence of Homer. On every hand Homer dominated the language of his successors; recourse to his vocabulary even preserved the language from decay; and his old-time words, the *verba antiqua et sonantia*, were retained even at the cost of intelligibility.

Through the influence of Homer, then, imitation became organic and literary reminiscence inherent in Greek literature. As far back as we can see, with all his zest for new forms of thought, the Greek lived in an atmosphere of associative reminiscence with the poet who had first seized hold of the essential verities of life. Granting all we may to the common instinct to plagiarize, granting all we may to the different

standard of literary behavior on the part of the ancients;¹ and realizing that that most delicate of virtues, gratitude, was never the strong point of the Greeks in literature or in life; there still remains something about Greek literary reminiscence that does not flavor of the *brutalité* of sheer plagiarism. With all our insistence on novelty (despite La Bruyère's complaint that everything has been said), it would almost seem that plagiarism, in poetry at least, is a pardonable offence to-day so long as the pillaged does not use the same tongue as the pillager. (Molière's confession "qu'il a pris son bien où il l'a trouvé" refers to subject-matter rather than to phraseology.) The intellectual chauvinism of the Greeks did not lead them to commit the venial offence even in the period when the fountain of wisdom flowed through books (*ἡ σοφίας πηγὴ διὰ βιβλίων ῥέει*). The Romans were the first people to go afield in literature, to learn of others; the Greeks carried the tradition of their own past. The real offence in the Roman age is that the Greeks did not make their own what they purloined from their ancestors. It is safer to melt stolen silver than to set it before one's guests with the accusing monogram of the owner still upon it.

The attitude of the Athenians towards plagiarism in the drama is in one respect not unlike that of the Elizabethans, apart from the difference that the latter had no English Homer as a common point of departure. Both demanded embellishment, be it native or imported. I take it that an audience in the Dionysiac theatre, as in the Globe theatre under Queen Elizabeth, manifested a certain passivity in the face of patent purloining in tragedy. Neither would ask the question that is asked by a speaker in Diphilus: "whose verses *are* these?" It was the play rather than the writer of the play that excited the keener interest. The Greek tragedians, unlike the Elizabethans, had a splendid heritage in their own tongue; and their sensitiveness to the charm of familiarity

¹ There is an interesting personal confession made by Isocrates (*Philippus* 93) to the effect that though by reason of advanced age he had repeated in that oration a sentence of some length from the *Panegyricus* (147) written about forty years before, he felt justified in so doing because others had plundered from him; "but," he adds, "I would not appropriate what belonged to another, as I have not done in the past." The latter statement is best explained as a lapse of memory in a man over ninety years of age. (In earlier years Isocrates had attacked the Sophists for using language that had lost its serviceableness because it had already been employed.)

in antique associations and their tolerance of old-time phraseology prompted a readier acquiescence in embellishment derived from contemporary sources.

In the classical writers quotation that is actually or virtually acknowledged has in general the same value in Greek as in English. It serves to embellish, to reinforce.¹ But apart from this normal type, direct quotation sometimes gives expression to the conscious sentiment of the past. In the classical writers this is almost unknown until the fourth century, where it is at once a stylistic ornament natural to that age of refinement, but at the same time a symptom of the disease of the times. As Athens draws near the close of her free life, her statesmen behold in the age of Solon and Aristides an ideal of justice not realized in the cruel distemper of their own age. Lycurgus, Aeschines, and Demosthenes enforce their appeals by quotations from Hesiod, Tyrtaeus, and Solon. Literature itself shows that the Hellenes had behind them the age when the vigor of the state needed no aesthetic reinforcement from the past, and were approaching the time when the Macedonian conquest was to make memory their only alleviation. As in victory, so by defeat, Greece came to a profounder consciousness of herself; in the long vistas of recollection she saw only the glory that had been hers, a glory that was no mean compensation for the loss of freedom to the masters of the world. Plutarch is the incarnation of this reverential regard for the splendid heritage of the province of Achaea.

But, to my thinking, there is no fundamental difference even in that most pronounced of antitheses — the antithesis between the age of progress and the age when the vital forces of creation had spent themselves. The expressions of the Hellenic mind show in the last analysis an organic resemblance to each other that is more intimate than that which unites the Hellene and the non-Hellene. Contrasts only emphasize the indestructibility of the Greek spirit.

In the Greek decadence we are wont to see only a corrosion of spirit, a fetichism of artificialities, and acquiescence in stereotyped forms. The poet loses his touch with life and has (as Bergk said) to carry the weight

¹ Plato appeals to the poets much as we do. He quotes the dramatists only twice where he gives their exact language; but Hesiod at least eleven times, and Homer on one hundred and sixteen occasions. See Professor Howes' article in *Harvard Studies*, Vol. VI.

of tradition like the historian. His passion is a *trompe l'oeil*. An "exposition of sleep" seems to have fallen upon literature as upon Bottom in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. And yet there are spasmodic incursions into the field of originality that temper the poignancy of regret. Amidst the trappings of parade there are still some pearls of Coromandel.

The attainment of elevation is the aim of style in the Roman age — elevation secured by imitation and emulation. Longinus himself would have us recognize that the methods of literary workmanship in his time were not radically alien from those of the classical writers. "This proceeding," he says, "is not plagiarism; it is like taking an impression from beautiful forms or figures or other works of art . . . and it seems to me that there would not have been so fine a bloom of perfection on Plato's philosophical doctrines and that he would not in many cases have found his way to poetical subject-matter unless he had . . . struggled with Homer for the primacy . . . for Plato or Demosthenes . . . inflaming our ardour and, as it were, illumining our path, will carry our minds in a mysterious way to the higher standards of sublimity which are imaged within us."¹

In truth the imitative character of later Greek literature is only another, but profounder, aspect of that supremacy of tradition which plays so large a rôle in the freer life of the fertile period; and as in the most original writers of that period, we hear continually the echoes of the past, so in the age when the Greeks first became *classics*, these same voices echo — only with such frequency that we feel that the later Greek, almost like Wordsworth's boy, found "his whole vocation in endless imitation"; or, as he surveyed the past, could anticipate the thought of the French poet:

Qui dois j'imiter pour devenir un génie?

To that absorption in the past we owe, amidst the aridities of Sophistry and the rigidities of Atticism, those sensations of relief when we meet

¹ [Longinus] *On the Sublime*, 13, 4; 14, 1; translation by Professor Rhys Roberts. Dr. Verrall has recently (*Class. Rev.* XIX, 202) called attention to the limitations of Longinus as a critic in ignoring the fact that literary association often prompted the choice of some peculiar locution in the classical writers which appeared frigid to later generations.

some familiar passage that has found a new abiding place. We are like Sancho Panza with the difference that, whereas that genial squire found it "pleasant to go about in expectation of adventures," we find it pleasant to read on in expectation of recollections of those authors who have fed our minds in youth and age. Our pleasure, too, is akin to that of Byron in painting — "the pleasure of being reminded of something we have seen or of something we shall see."

As the perceptiveness of the imagination declined, as the passion for progress waned except in science, as the power of the will stagnated and lassitude enfeebled the mind because everything seemed to have been said, when even an omnivorous philosophy became impotent, the present of the pagan world surrendered itself to the exactions of an imperious past; only the sentiment of adoration was left, a sentiment akin to the passionate veneration of the Humanists for the literature of the ancients. Through the medium of this sentiment the epigoni surveyed their past — antiquity itself was the warrant of fame. Plutarch says of a sculpture from the hand of Pheidias: "it was an antique at the very outset by reason of its beauty."

In every age there is a contrast between past and present in the creation of any human product that contains the seed of life. Literature, law, art, custom, are herein alike. But all peoples are not alike in the national expression of the struggle between an insurgent present and a militant past. Greek genius has a singular intellectual polarity; the impulse to create is not divorced from the impulse to recreate; the activity of the literary artist consists in adjusting his creative impulse to tradition; the forward movement of thought is developed in conjunction with the consciousness of the permanence of past achievement and with the readaptation of some old-time belief.

Progress, the creation of ideas fruitful for a nation's existence and for the welfare of other times, was the vital feature of ancient Greece. If the constant birth of new ideas was so rapid as to forbid the full fruition of the inventive faculty within each particular sphere, if Greece bore too much to see all her intellectual offspring reach maturity, her past gave definition to the fluent image of the shifting present. The inevitable discord of recession and progression is only one of those discords which, as the philosopher of Ephesus has taught, are in reality concords; for contraries unite in a higher unity — the unity of the Greek spirit.